

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1-12. (Canceled)

13. (New) A flexible vertebral linking device, comprising:  
a cylindrical body portion having a first end and a second end;  
a first rod portion extending from the first end in a first direction from the cylindrical body portion;  
a second rod portion having a first elongated body and an enlarged end portion, wherein the enlarged end portion is positioned within the cylindrical body portion and the first elongated body extends in a second direction opposite the first direction and passes through an opening in the cylindrical body portion second end;  
a first dampening member positioned between the enlarged end portion and the cylindrical body portion first end; and  
a second dampening member positioned between the enlarged end portion and the cylindrical body portion second end, wherein the first dampening member and the second dampening member each include at least one inclined face.
14. (New) The flexible vertebral linking device of claim 13, wherein the cylindrical body portion second end comprises a cap.
15. (New) The flexible vertebral linking device of claim 14, wherein the cap includes a threaded inner region.

16. (New) The flexible vertebral linking device of claim 13, wherein the first rod portion includes a threaded end configured to engage a threaded portion of the cylindrical body portion.

17. (New) The flexible vertebral linking device of claim 13, wherein the second dampening member includes a ring shape with an opening configured to receive the first elongated body of the second rod portion.

18. (New) The flexible vertebral linking device of claim 13, wherein the opening in the cylindrical body portion second end includes a width that is less than a width of the enlarged end portion but is greater than a width of the first elongated body to allow the second rod portion to laterally bend with respect to the cylindrical body portion.

19. (New) The flexible vertebral linking device of claim 13, wherein the opening in the cylindrical body portion second end is eccentrically located on the cylindrical body portion second end.

20. (New) The flexible vertebral linking device of claim 13, wherein the opening in the cylindrical body portion second end includes an oblong shape.

21. (New) A method of joining vertebral implants, comprising:  
providing a cylindrical body portion having a first end and a second end;

connecting a first rod portion to the cylindrical body portion extending from the first end in a first direction;

positioning a first dampening member including at least one inclined face within the cylindrical body portion;

positioning a second rod portion having a first elongated body and an enlarged end portion within the cylindrical body portion such that the first dampening member is located between the enlarged end portion and the cylindrical body portion first end;

positioning a second dampening member including at least one inclined face within the cylindrical body portion between the enlarged end and the cylindrical body portion second end; and

placing a cap having an opening that includes a width that is less than a width of the enlarged end portion of the second rod portion over the second rod elongated body such that the elongated body passes through the central opening and the enlarged end portion is secured within the cylindrical body portion.

22. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the cap includes a threaded inner region.

23. (New) The method claim 21, wherein the first rod portion includes a threaded end configured to engage a threaded portion of the cylindrical body portion.

24. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the second dampening member includes a ring shape with an opening configured to receive the first elongated body of the second rod portion.

25. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the opening in the cap includes a width that is less than a width of the enlarged end portion of the second rod portion and is greater than a width of the first elongated body.

26. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the opening in the cap is eccentrically located on the cylindrical body second end.

27. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the opening in the cap includes an oblong shape.